

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY  
OFFICE OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION  
STATE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

June 22, 2021  
1:15 PM

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY  
5825 FLORIDA BOULEVARD  
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA  
VETERANS MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Girouard called the regular monthly Soil & Water Conservation Commission Meeting to order at 1:15 P.M. Mr. Ed Yerger gave the invocation and Mr. Steve Horvath lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

The roll was called by Ms. LaClasha Alexander.

**Members and Alternate Members present:**

Dr. Ernest Girouard – Chairman, Area IV  
Mr. Steve Horvath-Vice Chairman, Area V  
Mr. Larry Sayes- Secretary-Treasurer, Area III  
Mr. John Alan Williams- LACD President  
Mr. Reggie Skains- Area I Member  
Mr. Ed Yerger- Area II Member  
Mr. Brad Spicer- LDAF Alternate Member  
Dr. Mike Salassi, LSU AgCenter, Alternate Member

**Members absent:**

Southern University Agricultural Center  
Representative

A quorum was present.

**Others Present:**

Mr. Chad Kacir, NRCS State Conservationist  
Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC  
Ms. LaClasha “Clay” Alexander, LDAF-OSWC

Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC/ Director SSWCC  
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC

**Public Comments**

Chairman Girouard asked if there were any comments from the public or from Commission members and there were none.

**Approval of the Agenda**

Chairman Girouard called for a motion to approve the June 22, 2021 SSWCC agenda.

**Motion by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

**Seconded by:** Mr. Alan Williams

Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the minutes

Chairman Girouard called for a motion to approve the May 25, 2021 SSWCC minutes. Mr. Breaux said there is a correction that needs to be made in the minutes. In the "Other Business" section, it states there were no area meetings due to Covid-19. This should be amended to say that Area 1 did have a meeting in February 2020.

Chairman Girouard called for a motion to approve the minutes as amended.

**Motion by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

**Seconded by:** Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement- Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC

The Farm Bill program reporting for May closed on June 10<sup>th</sup> with May's Farm Bill total being \$49,826. The districts have \$167,338 to earn over the next 4 months. The Farm Bill reporting system will open July 1st for districts to enter their June hours.

Legislative Regular Session/State Funding- Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC

Mr. Breaux said there weren't any bills or resolutions that directly affect districts, but there were a few that may be helpful for districts. HCR 88 establishes policy and protocols on groundwater extractions. This legislation had been discussed for many years and was finally passed during this session. House Concurrent Resolution 55 creates the Outdoor Conservation Study Group to study conservation funding mechanisms and programs. This resolution was based off an ongoing state effort led by the Nature Conservancy Group called the Habitat Conservation Initiative. This study group will include all entities dealing with private land conservation assistance. LDAF is a part of the group as is NRCS as a non-voting member.

NACD Summer Meeting- Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC/ Mr. Alan Williams, LACD President

Mr. Breaux said the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) will have their annual summer meeting on July 24-27, 2021 in Chicago, IL. Mr. Williams said through his NACD conference calls he learned that this will be a shorter meeting than normal. NACD has reached out to past NACD presidents to have them included in the meeting and 11 of them have confirmed their attendance. There are approximately 150 registered participants so far and he mentioned that NACD plans to have 2022's summer meeting in Puerto Rico.

South Central NACD Regional Meeting- Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC

The South Central National Association of Conservation Districts Region Meeting will be August 12-13, 2021 in Eureka Springs, AR.

**New Business**

Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

Chairman Girouard said the Commission received two letters from D'Arbonne SWCD and DeSoto SWCD. The letter from D'Arbonne SWCD stated they received a letter from the Commission about Mr. Kenneth Halley being disqualified from the 2021 Supervisor Election due to him not submitting a nominating petition before May 1, 2021 and have accepted the Commission's decision. The letter from DeSoto SWCD states they received a letter from the Commission about Mr. William Bagley being disqualified from the 2021 Supervisor Election due to him not submitting a nominating petition before May 1, 2021 and have accepted the Commission's decision. Chairman Girouard called for a motion to accept the disqualification acknowledgement letters from D'Arbonne SWCD and DeSoto SWCD.

**Motion by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

**Seconded by:** Mr. Larry Sayes

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Girouard said there are 2 supervisor reappointments for three year terms: Allen SWCD-Mr. Thomas Mayes- effective July 27, 2021- July 27, 2024 and Red River SWCD- Mr. Jarrod Blake McCartney- effective August 30, 2021- August 30, 2024.

Chairman Girouard said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the reappointments for Allen SWCD-Mr. Thomas Mayes- effective July 27, 2021- July 27,2024 and Red River SWCD- Mr. Jarrod Blake McCartney- effective August 30, 2021- August 30, 2024.

**Motion by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

**Seconded by:** Mr. Ed Yerger

Motion passed unanimously.

### Correspondence

#### NRCS State Conservationist Report- Mr. Chad Kacir, State Conservationist

Mr. Kacir said he has had the chance to visit field offices located in Jonesville and Colfax last week. He said it was good to get out and go to the field offices and enjoy board discussions.

Service centers still staffed at 50% including supervisors, which has helped with staffing numbers. Producers have been allowed to go into offices by appointment only. FSA is staffed at 75% due their acreage reporting. Mr. Kacir said he is hopeful that field offices will get to FSA staffing levels around August and September to administer the upcoming CSP and CRP workloads. NRCS State offices and headquarters are still staffed at 25% and aren't expected to change for a few months. NRCS has approximately 195 full time employees and 10 summer employees. Nationally, NRCS has filled 40% of the 1500 vacant positions during the first round of direct hiring. Louisiana was able to fill many positions but still have 28 available positions including some upcoming retirement vacancies.

EPA and the CORE are reopening the WOTUS and Navigable Waters Rule. Changes are expected during the reopening and there will be a chance to comment on any suggested changes presented.

Mr. Kacir mentioned some NRCS technicians are soon to retire. He said that he is an advocate of the Targeted Technician program, as it is a great starting point for future NRCS employees. Districts have the advantage to hire local applicants quickly and have them trained to apply for an NRCS opening within a year. NRCS hopes to gain great employees from the Targeted Tech program as well as the NACD Technician program.

Mr. Kacir said NRCS is planning to add the 4th year funds to the Farm Bill agreement during this fiscal year. He said expects additional positions to become available and hopes that there will be more funding opportunities. He said NRCS recently hired Ms. Sharonte' Williams to fill the vacant position formerly held by Mr. Kendal Hicks as the Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations. She started about two weeks ago and has been traveling to different field offices and attending meetings. She recently attended the Area 2 meeting last week.

Mr. Sayes said that he recently read an article about "Clear 30". Mr. Kacir said Clear 30 is a new 30 year CRP agreement. This will be an additional option to the usual 15 year CRP. NRCS has extended CRP signups to the first week of August. NRCS is expected to submit a conservation plan to FSA towards the end of September and FSA must have the funds obligated by September 30<sup>th</sup>. There are approximately 350 renewals and 100 new applicants.

## LSU AgCenter Center Report- Dr. Michael Salassi

Dr. Salassi said he wanted to remind the Commission of a couple of upcoming events:

Some of the field days include:

1. June 24, 2021- Taylor Foundation Field Day- Somerset Plantation- Newellton, Louisiana
2. June 30, 2021- Rice Research Field Day- H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station- Crowley, Louisiana
3. July 15, 2021- Louisiana Soil Health Forum- Scott Civic Center- New Roads, Louisiana
4. July 15, 2021- Road Rice Field Day- Northeast Research Station- St. Joseph, Louisiana
5. July 21, 2021- Sugarcane Field Day- St. Gabriel, Louisiana

Dr. Salassi also said every year LSU gets questions regarding crop damage due to pesticide drift or deer. Information was sent out to producers regarding these issues. Pesticide drift issues should be addressed through LDAF. LSU Agents can advise producers on how to manage the crops but LDAF identifies the drift. Landowners should contact Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries in regards to crops that have been damaged by Deer. LSU AgCenter is involved in crops damaged by deer because one of the required forms is called "A Verification of Crop Damage" and an LSU Extension Agent signs the forms.

Dr. Salassi mentioned the Louisiana Legislature passed the state budget. LSU received funding for some specific AgCenter entities. Camp Grant Walker was able to receive \$500,000 for renovations and Parker Coliseum was able to receive a \$7 million dollar for renovations. The Speaker of the House hopes to receive more funds for the Coliseum next year.

### Meritorious Award Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC

Mr. Breaux said at their June 9, 2021 board meeting, Vermillion SWCD approved Ms. Denise Simon to be nominated to receive a Meritorious Award of \$500 based on her exceptional performance evaluation and commitment shown to her district as well as the producers in her parish. The nomination packet was reviewed and included the following as requested in PPM #1:

1. Employee's name
2. Title of Employee
3. Personnel number
4. A successful performance evaluation in the same fiscal year, a job performance plan showing an explanation of the significant achievement and how it benefited the SWCD, the conservation partnership and the district cooperators.
5. The reward amount proposed by the SWCD.

Chairman Girouard said Ms. Simon is one of the best technicians they have hired to work for the Vermillion SWCD and has taken her position very seriously. Chairman Girouard said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the nomination packet to give Ms. Denise Simon a one-time \$500 meritorious award.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer  
Seconded by: Mr. Larry Sayes  
Passed unanimously.

### Correspondence/Articles:

Chairman Girouard said the Commission received two travel requests: Crescent SWCD is requesting authorization for Rebecca Livaudais, Dr. Thomas Vitrano, H. George Schlorff, Irvin Dares III, Blaise Pezold, and Nina Ockman to attend the NACD South Central Regional Conference in Eureka Springs, AK on August 12-13, 2021.

Vermillion SWCD is requesting authorization for Dr. Ernest Girouard to attend the NACD Summer meeting in Chicago, IL on July 24-27, 2021

Chairman Girouard said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the out of state travel request.

**Motion by:** Mr. Ed Yerger

**Seconded by:** Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

#### Articles

- Is carbon the “crop” of the future
- Biden administration moves to replace Trump-era ‘waters’ rule
- NACD responds to President Biden’s FY22 Budget Proposal
- USDA Announces New Initiative to Quantify Climate Benefits of Conservation Reserve Program
- Central Review of Legislative & Regulatory Actions
- Louisiana wetlands and waterfowl habitats
- Methane emissions from U.S. dairies in decline

#### OTHER BUSINESS

##### Next Meeting


Chairman Girouard said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 21, 2021 at 1:15 PM in the Veterans Auditorium, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806.

##### Adjournment

Chairman Girouard said if there was no other business or comments from the public or Commission members, he will accept a motion to adjourn.

**Motion:** Mr. Reggie Skains made a motion to adjourn at 2:40 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

/s/ Dr. Ernest Girouard



Dr. Ernest Girouard, Chairman State Soil and Water Conservation Commission